

Saxe Gotha Dispatch

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Museum Remains Closed Due to COVID-19 but Will Open Soon

The Lexington County Museum is still currently closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are doing this in order to protect staff and visitors and to stop the spread of the virus.

However, we ask that you follow us on Facebook or check our website as we have worked with the County of Lexington to develop a plan to reopen. We should be able to reopen sometime over the next month once training on new cleaning procedures is completed. We want to ensure that we are limiting the chances of the spread of the virus by consistently cleaning in a way that will destroy the coronavirus and other germs.



Although the museum is closed to the public, staff members J.R. Fennell and Patricia Shandor remain busy at work.

The museum has remained active on social media though our sites remain closed to the public. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram to track our weekly architectural scavenger hunt clues or find videos from around the grounds. Check our website, follow us on Facebook

(www.facebook.com/lexingtoncountymuseum) and Instagram (@lexcomuseum) to keep up with the museum, get the latest information, and to find out more about when we will reopen.

Museum Past and Upcoming Outreach Efforts

Museum staff members haven't given any presentations over the past few months due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

If you'd like to have a museum staff member speak to your group once it is safe, don't hesitate to give us a call. We can

speak on a variety of topics related to the museum, the county, and its history. Some of the most popular topics include the quilts and other artifacts from the Dutch Fork, the Quattlebaum and Hall families and the rifles they made, and the history of alcohol in Lexington County.

Exploring our Gardens

While house tours and school programs have been on a hiatus at the museum there has still been plenty of activity on the grounds. Staff members and volunteers have been busy with a variety of projects on the grounds and gardens. The biggest ongoing project involves maintaining our gardens.

There are three main components of our gardens at the museum. The first area is a formal garden which is located in front of the Leaphart-Harman house. This garden consists of plants you would typically find in a manicured antebellum landscape such as oak-leaf hydrangeas, crepe myrtles, lilies, magnolia trees and tea olives. The Lexington Master Gardeners planted a raised round bed in the center that contains other attractive and period-correct perennials.

Behind the John Fox house we have three garden areas consisting of an herb garden, wildflower garden, and a mixed-use garden. The herb garden was conceived of by the Lexington Herb Bunch and contains examples of herbs typically found in 18th and 19th century gardens in Lexington County for use in cooking and medicines. Examples of the herbs we have growing currently include rosemary, thyme, sage, chives, oregano, fennel, coriander, bee balm, salad burnet, and mint. The wildflower garden was conceived of by volunteer and board member Stanley "Rooster" Rikard in compliance with our Palmetto Wildlife Habitat certification obtained through the South Carolina Wildlife Federation. In this garden you'll find flowers that attract native birds, butterflies and pollinators. These flowers include sunflowers, black-eyed susans, coneflowers, milkweed, and coreopsis. We also have a few other areas where we have planted other historically important plants such as stinging nettle, indigo (*Indigofera Suffruticosa*) and Carolina Gold Rice.

The most dynamic area though, would have to be our extensive vegetable garden located behind the Senn Cabin. This garden was also conceived of by Mr. Rikard who has diligently maintained his planting and harvesting schedule despite the pandemic. This garden was originally planted to use as an educational tool for our school field trip visitors. In the past we even had visitors help dig potatoes as part of our Family Day activities. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the large-scale events due to Covid-19 but the harvesting does not stop. So far this year we have already harvested Red and Blue potatoes, lettuce, carrots, radishes, red and white onions, mustard greens, kale, turnips and cabbage. We are currently harvesting green beans, okra, eggplant, bell peppers, spicy peppers, and corn.

What quintessential summer crop will you not find in our garden this year? Tomatoes. Sadly tomatoes were not widely grown in our parts before the late 19th century so we left them out of our garden.

Visitors can safely explore the grounds at the museum during our regular hours to see what sorts of plants we have growing and glimpse what types of plants were grown in early Lexington County history. We ask that you refrain from walking through the garden beds.



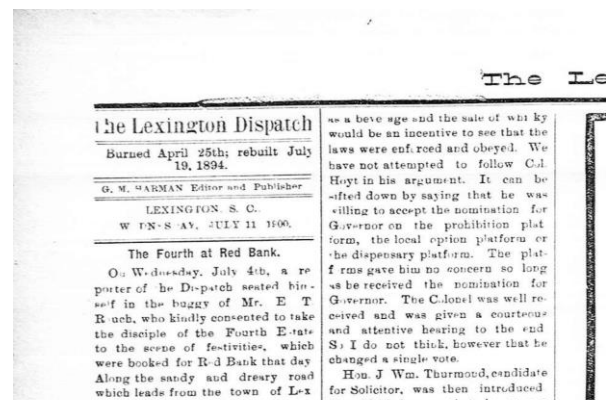
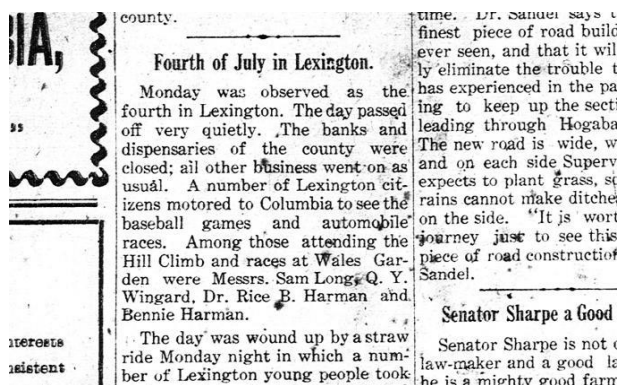
A Brief History of July Fourth Celebrations in the Midlands

When we think of the Fourth of July today, most of us think of cookouts, fireworks, boat rides on Lake Murray, and Independence Day sales at stores. Despite the fact that some of our July Fourth traditions are more recent inventions, some of these traditions could be found throughout much of the history of the Columbia, SC region.

Independence Day started out in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as a small holiday where people could assert themselves as Americans. Businesses usually didn't close and certainly didn't hold Independence Day sales. It is hard to pin down exactly when Independence Day celebrations began in the Midlands region, but it is likely that they came about as a result of the patriotism stirred up by the War of 1812, which was fought against the British. The celebration of the Fourth in the first half of the nineteenth century was almost always marked by the celebratory firing of weapons, especially in Lexington County (then known as Lexington District). Edwin Scott, a chronicler of regional history in the 19th century, stated that around 1820, there was an Irish immigrant on Columbia's Main Street who owned a grocery store and "a huge blunderbuss, which he always fired off at Christmas and Fourth of July." Children usually did not have school around the Fourth in the antebellum period. Children also made an effort to not wear yellow breeches for fear they would be labeled as British. In addition, local leaders and politicians gave speeches on Independence Day. Enslaved African-Americans recognized the importance of the Fourth of July as a powerful reminder of freedom as well. Several slave revolts either occurred on or were planned for the Fourth of July. This caused some concerns among whites over whether slaves should be allowed to attend Fourth of July festivities.

The coming of the Civil War brought many changes to the daily lives of Southerners but didn't really change the celebration of July Fourth. Many citizens still recognized the holiday despite wanting their independence from the United States. However, this began to change after the Confederacy's surrender at Appomattox. White Southerners, including those in Richland and Lexington, began to see July Fourth as not their holiday. Southern African-Americans continued to celebrate the holiday however, leading to some white commentators, including the famous diarist Mary Chestnut, to label the holiday "Black Fourth." Whites' aversion to celebrating the Fourth continued throughout Reconstruction and, in some places such as Charleston, throughout the rest of the 19th century. This aversion to the Fourth didn't last in the Midlands of SC and, by the 1890s, many white citizens resumed celebrating the Fourth. Just like today, Midlands residents would celebrate together with fireworks (or gunshots) and community cook-outs. Politicians would often give speeches at these "barbecues" as well. Baseball games and races were common in the late 19th and 20th centuries too. The July 7, 1917 edition of the Lexington Dispatch newspaper even mentions that local youths took part in a "straw ride" through town.

Although the traditions surrounding July 4th have become somewhat different over the years, the holiday continues to be a day when Americans can celebrate their freedom and have fun with friends and family.



Museum Calendar of Events

No events are planned at the museum as of now due to the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.



Lexington County Museum

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A Story Behind Every Door



We're on the Web!

<https://lex-co.sc.gov/lexington-county-museum> and
www.lexingtoncountymuseum.org

The Lexington County Museum was started in 1970 to collect, preserve and present the history of Lexington County. After initially having only one historic house, the museum expanded and now has thirty historic structures over seven acres in downtown Lexington. Through exhibits in historic houses, the museum interprets everyday life in the town of Lexington and throughout Lexington County from the eighteenth century to the start of the Civil War. The museum offers guided tours to visitors for a small fee and has thirteen different hands-on programs for school groups free of charge by appointment. These programs attract schools from around the state and educate students about the history of Lexington County and about the everyday life of Lexington County residents in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Friends of the Lexington County Museum is a non-profit group founded in 1997 with an advisory board, officers, and a board of trustees representing all municipalities in Lexington County. Its mission is to enhance the Lexington County Museum through its duly appointed commission and to support, aid, and assist in the improvement and expansion of the Museum. The Friends group sponsors fund-raising projects to help further the Museum's valuable contribution to the county. The Friends group has raised over \$280,000 for the museum so far. To learn more about the Friends or to join, visit the museum's webpage (<https://lex-co.sc.gov/lexington-county-museum/friends-museum>).

Highlighted Artifact from the Museum's Collections

This issue's highlighted artifact is a hand-hewn barrel that was probably used for grain storage. Barrels such as this one could also be used in the production of sauerkraut. Many of those of Germanic heritage in Lexington County often would make sauerkraut by layering cabbage and salt in a vessel such as these. They would often eat chicken with a side of sauerkraut with bacon in the middle for their midday meal. Once the museum reopens, you may view this and our other historic artifacts in the kitchen.

